

LIANYU TAN

HADES LUSTS FOR  
SOMETHING DARK.

SOMETHING  
DANGEROUS.

# BREATHLES

AN F/F HADES  
AND PERSEPHONE  
SHORT STORY



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## AUTHOR'S NOTE

*Breathless* is a short story accompanying my novel *Captive in the Underworld* and is chronologically set during the time skip at the beginning of Chapter 13—Lessons. Haven't read the novel yet? Get it here: <http://go.lianyutan.com/underworld>

You can also read *Breathless* as a sexy standalone short story. What you need to know from the myths: Hades, god(dess) of the underworld, kidnaps and weds Persephone, goddess of spring growth.

This story was written exclusively as a thank you to newsletter subscribers. If you came across this book by some other means, you can still join the subscriber list. Join us for exclusive content, updates, discounts, and opportunities to request ARCs: <http://go.lianyutan.com/subscribe>

## SUMMARY

### **Hades steals her breath away.**

A few weeks into their marriage, Persephone is still learning how to please Hades, dreaded goddess of the underworld. As her fear wars with desire, Persephone must learn how to satisfy her captor and steel her own heart in order to survive.



A non-exhaustive list of content tags for this story:

Forced breath play, (some) lesbian sex, non-con/dub-con (due to kidnapping), dysfunctional marriage, bad domme, this is fiction not a manual, do not try at home, if someone treats you like this, run.

*Dedicated to everyone who wanted more.*

## BREATHLESS



Persephone stared at her needlework, frowning. She'd intended to stitch something cheery, like a branch of almond tree blossoms; instead, the dark lines and shadowed hollows reminded her of nothing else than a mortal's skull. She tugged at the thread, unpicking a stitch when the needle caught in her forefinger.

She drew away from her work, not wishing to stain it. Golden ichor welled up when she pulled the needle free from her flesh, the divine hue of her blood seeming to mock her with the proof of her immortality.

A change in the air made her stiffen. Hades moved as silently as mist when she wanted to—Persephone hadn't even heard the door opening and closing. She glanced up from her seat near the window to find Hades hovering over her, a specter clad all in black. Her pulse quickened.

Hades dropped to her knees before her and took her hand, kissing her fingertips. Her tongue lapped at the ichor, and she pulled Persephone's fingers into her warm, wet mouth.

Persephone shuddered at the sight of Hades on her knees. It uncoiled something deep within her, something she wasn't yet able to name.

Hades gave her fingertips one final kiss and released her. "Come to bed," she said, rising. She reached across Persephone to close the window

shutters, leaving the room illuminated by a single candle.

The world seemed to narrow. Persephone swallowed to ease her dry throat. “Let me put this away.” She tossed the half-done embroidery into a basket, then fled to Hades’ bathing chamber, closing the door behind her. She turned on a tap and ran her hands under the cool water. The bleeding had stopped. She clutched the edge of the basin, tightening her grip to stop her hands from trembling.

A few weeks into their marriage, and still she couldn’t bear Hades’ presence. She’d trade all her worldly goods for just one night of peace, one dreamless sleep without Hades’ arm curled around her side.

Persephone splashed water across her cheeks and then pressed her face into a towel, drying herself. She would bend. She would endure. But she wouldn’t break.

She returned to find Hades sitting on the edge of the bed, her hair unbound as she ran a brush through her long curls. She was handsome. Radiant. The kind of woman the Muses wrote about.

Hades beckoned, her slender fingers extended. Persephone went to her as though a thread connected them, her unwilling steps powerless against this invisible force.

She sat on the bed and took the hairbrush, continuing the work of brushing Hades’ hair. This should’ve felt safe. Innocent. Instead, she was all too aware of the soft bounce in Hades’ curls, the warmth of her neck, the elegant line of her throat. Hades closed her eyes, her long lashes grazing her cheeks.

Even Persephone could not delay the inevitable forever. Hades plucked the hairbrush from her grasp, setting it aside. She snapped her fingers, and two more candles flared into life, lessening the shuttered gloom.

Hades traced her knuckles down the side of Persephone’s face, her gaze devouring. The candle flames reflected orange and amber in her dark eyes.



Persephone pressed her knees together. Her breath caught when Hades' thumb brushed over her lips. "You're early tonight," she said. There had still been light outside when Hades had closed the shutters, time enough that Persephone had believed herself safe for a few hours more. She hadn't braced herself for this, hadn't steeled her heart and found a distant chamber for her mind to retreat to.

"I had to see you."

Those five small words made Persephone's stomach drop. She bit her lip. If it were simply a matter of *seeing* her, that would be one thing, but Hades had never contented herself with only that.

"Surely you've left some work undone," she said, knowing it would not save her, wanting to needle Hades all the same.

"Nothing that cannot wait." Hades canted her head to one side, her lips curved in a smile. "I did not think you would concern yourself. How touching."

"I'm only thinking of the mortals' souls."

"Of course." Hades traced her hand up Persephone's spine, pausing at her neck. She ran her fingertips down the side of Persephone's throat, sparking goosebumps all over her skin.

"I don't—" Persephone began. "I don't want—"

"Shh." Hades kissed her, with her warm mouth and soft lips. Strange to think she could be so gentle when she wanted. So yielding.

Persephone drew back. "I can't—" she took a breath. "This isn't—" she stopped, tried again. "You know this isn't right."

"Right. Yes, let us discuss rights, shall we?"

"That's not what I—"

Hades brought her lips close to Persephone's ear. "You have no right being as captivating as you are." Her hand trailed down Persephone's shoulder and across her rib cage as she leaned in and inhaled, her nose pressed against the crown of Persephone's head.

Persephone responded to Hades' touch as she always did, a bead of wetness slicking the inside of her thigh. She shuddered. Her hand found Hades' knee, gripped it as if to push her away.

"When the gods made you, they must have wept to behold perfection," Hades said.

Persephone's face colored. "Nothing is perfect and all beings are flawed. Isn't that what you tell your mortals?"

"For you, I could make an exception."

"There are no exceptions."

"Now who is thinking in absolutes?"

Persephone scowled.

Hades gazed down at her, a smile upon her face. She seemed warmer now they'd wed, the hard edges of her bearing filed down. Was that fondness genuine, or was it equivalent to the faint affection of a lord for his mare, a hunting master for his dogs?

Hades caressed her through the fabric of her chiton, her hands running past Persephone's waist and over her hips. She bent her lips to Persephone's throat and kissed her neck, her mouth soft and pliant. Her touch was anathema.

"Let me—let me taste you," Persephone said, laying down her words upon the altar of Hades' mercy.

Hades drew back. A small frown line appeared in the middle of her forehead.

Persephone scrambled off the bed and sank to her knees on the floor. She clasped her wife's ankles and ran her hands up Hades' calves, gazing up.

Hades' lips pursed; her eyes narrowed.

Persephone gathered the folds of Hades' chiton and hiked it up, kissing the solid muscle of Hades' thigh. Hades plucked the fabric from her, ruching her skirts around her hips.

With her hands freed for other purposes, Persephone continued caressing Hades' legs. She fumbled to find the side ties holding Hades' undergarment together and unknotted each one in turn.

Hades' fingertips traced spirals across her scalp. Persephone leaned forward.

It was easier this way, without the suffocating press of Hades' body against her own, without the curl of Hades' fingers inside her unwinding all pretense of her own self-control. Easier to give than to receive, to pleasure than to be pleased. This she could manage. This she could do.

Persephone lowered her head and kissed the inside of Hades' thighs, first one side, then the other. Her kisses crept higher until she'd reached Hades' sex.

Hades tensed against her. Persephone breathed her in, the musky dark scent of damp earth. Hades' fingers curled in her hair.

Persephone parted Hades' folds with her tongue and kissed a line down the valley of her sex. She raised her hand to touch her, but Hades grabbed her wrist.

"Not today."

Persephone rested her palms against Hades' thighs instead as she worked, her tongue encircling the precious bundle of nerves at the apex of Hades' sex. Hades leaned back, eyes closed, both her hands now caressing Persephone's scalp.

If this was all her wife had ever demanded of her, she might have counted herself fortunate.

Hades allowed her to continue for some time, but then her fingers tightened in Persephone's hair, pulling her back. "Enough."

Persephone searched her face. The candlelight glowed orange against her skin. "Did I do something wrong?"

"Not at all." Hades rearranged her chiton, pulling the hem down to fall to her ankles once more. She patted the mattress beside her.

Persephone inched up and sat on the edge of the bed. She shivered when Hades reached for her, unpinning first one fibula, then the other, her fingertips warm. The folds of her chiton dropped from her shoulders. Once she might have sat there, an unmoving statue, frozen with fear and helpless with anticipation, but now Persephone reached behind herself, her hands going to the knot in her breastband.

What had changed? She told herself she was simply doing the bare minimum to survive, but that wasn't it. At least, not all of it.

Hades touched her arm. "Not yet." She watched Persephone, her face hungry, wanton. Persephone lowered her eyes.

Hades moved until she was sitting up with her back against the headrest. "Come here and lie against me."

She wasn't going to strike her, then. Persephone teetered between relief and disappointment but did as she was bid, sitting up with her back against Hades, her legs stretched out between Hades' knees. She glanced behind to find her wife looking down with a faint smile, her hands brushing the hair back from Persephone's face.

She ought to have known there would be no sweetness here, only torment.

Hades reached down and wrapped an arm around Persephone's throat, her elbow hooked beneath her jaw. She wrenched her arm upwards.

There wasn't even time to gasp. Persephone clawed at Hades, every dark legend about the Queen of the Underworld occluding her thoughts as her body revolted against the threat. Her nails scrabbled at Hades' arm, heels slapping the mattress as she sought to free herself.

Persephone's face bloomed with heat when Hades released her, her heart pounding in double time to return her circulation to rights. She tried to scramble forward but Hades caught her around the waist, holding her tight. "What are you doing?"

"Shh." Hades resumed stroking her hair as if everything were all right.

Persephone's heart hammered in her chest as though she were a trussed rabbit, caught in one of Artemis's snares. "I didn't like that," she said, though she knew it immediately for a lie, or at best a half-truth. With the pain receding from her throat, the cage of Hades' arms held a warmth that chased away the chill, gray gloom of the underworld. Beneath Hades' gaze she was treasured. Beloved. All things denied to her on the overworld, save from the life she commanded.

Persephone was still a goddess. She turned toward worship as a daisy turned toward Helios.

"Are you certain?" Hades asked.

Persephone shivered, the skin on her arms turning to gooseflesh. "I don't like it," she said again.

"I see." Hades loosened her grip on Persephone's waist. Her arm trailed up until it once again rested against her throat.

Persephone's breath came in short gasps.

"Shh..." Hades pressed her lips against the nape of her neck. "Do you trust me?"

*No. No, no, no.* Persephone shook her head.

"A pity."

It didn't matter what she said, did it? It never did, with her.

Hades tightened her hold, slowly at first. Persephone whimpered.

When Hades squeezed, heat rushed to her face, again. She gripped Hades' arm, trying to tug it away, but trying was as pointless as the torment of Sisyphus.

Green spots appeared in her vision, dancing amidst the black, like stars twinkling on a dry summer's night. The spots were closing in when Hades let her go.

Persephone doubled over, shaking. She reached up and touched the skin around her collarbone, where the links in her necklace had left tiny

divots in her flesh. Hades' hand rested on her waist, a matching imprint embossed along her arm.

When Hades reached for her, she flinched. "I can't—don't—please," she said. "It feels like drowning." It didn't; not really. She'd have braved the dead souls of the Acheron over Hades any day. Worse than Hades, far worse, was the heat coiling inside her, the harlot in her that craved Hades' touch. Even when it hurt.

Especially when it hurt.

"Your pulse has quickened," Hades murmured. Her fingertips traced the side of Persephone's throat. Her other hand curled around Persephone's hips, holding her in place. Hades' gaze was rapt; adoring.

Persephone burst into tears.

"Shh." Hades kissed the crown of her head and rocked her as she cried. "I know, I know."

Persephone kept trying to speak, but the tears wouldn't let her. The syllables came out wrong, slurred by her sobs. She forced herself to breathe. "Don't. Enough. I can't."

Hades rubbed her shoulders. "One more time, then. Tonight. You can endure it."

Persephone shook her head.

"You can," Hades said.

She spoke the words as though observing herself from far away. "Then bind me."

"Pardon?"

"I don't want..." Persephone tried again. "I don't want to try and fight you. So bind me."

Hades paused for a moment, considering. "As you wish." She found the knot of Persephone's breastband and untied it, unwinding the fabric and using it to secure her wrists.

The cool air danced over Persephone's skin, hardening her nipples. Perhaps she'd made a mistake—another in a long series of mistakes. But maybe it could stop her from obsessing over whether she deserved this, whether her body's reactions to Hades' touch made her complicit in her own ruination. She'd never asked to be wed—not here and not now. That had to mean something, even in the underworld.

The touch of Hades' fingertips winding cloth over her hands recalled to her their nuptials. Her palms itched. She clasped them, squeezing them tight.

Hades tested the knot, finding it secure. Persephone shivered when Hades' hands drifted to her breasts, fondling them, pinching her nipples. Hades' chiton rubbed against her back, the thin layer of fabric the only thing separating her from the heat of Hades' skin.

Persephone whimpered when Hades' hands once again ascended to her shoulders and her arm settled into place. She took a deep breath, then another.

Hades caressed the side of her throat, her breath warm against Persephone's ear. "Count to five."

"One," Persephone whispered.

Hades nuzzled her neck, her teeth nipping at her skin.

"Two."

The muscles in Hades' arm tensed. Persephone instinctively reached up, only to find her hands were still bound.

"Three."

"The scent of your fear is delicious," Hades whispered.

"F-four—"

Hades jerked hard against her throat. The bindings didn't help. If anything, they only underscored how much she'd given to Hades, and how much more she might be expected to give.

She struggled, twisting in Hades' grasp. Her world narrowed to the crush of Hades' arm against her neck; the roaring heat in her ears; the spots darting across her vision.

Her power flared, seeking an outlet. On the overworld, there would have been dozens of life forms to call upon—the vines crawling along the walls and up to the eaves, the trees providing shade in the courtyards; even the moss sprouting between bricks and paving stones would've heard her plea. Here, she found no answer.

The room shook. A pitcher by the window rattled, bounced, then toppled over, the pottery smashing on the floor, wine spilling in a dark puddle. The candles guttered out, leaving pools of hot wax and reedy threads of smoke in their wake.

She heard, distantly, the wonder in Hades' voice.

“Oh, Persephone.”

And then there was nothing.



Persephone woke with a start. Above was the ceiling of Hades' bedchamber; she recognized the shape of her furniture in the dim light. The room was still in disarray, but one candle had been relit, casting shadows both long and dark. Hades lay beside her, watching her.

Nothing seemed quite right. She felt distant from her body, hanging on to her flesh by a thread. She glanced down to see her hands unbound.

Hades drew her in until Persephone was cradled in her arms. She caressed her, hands running through Persephone's hair and down her back. There was something different about her; Hades' touch left tingles on her skin. Her smile was radiant, the surrounding air almost seeming to hum with energy, her eyes gleaming black from edge to edge.



Persephone wasn't sure if she wanted to cry. The sound of her breath seemed too loud. Her pulse skittered in her chest, and she made a choked noise in the back of her throat.

"Aphrodite herself could not claim to be lovelier than you," Hades said.

Persephone brushed her fingertips against her own throat. The phantom press of Hades' arm still lingered. *It should be you in Tartarus, not Kronos*, she thought, but without any heat to the sentiment.

Hades kissed the crown of her head. Her hand crept down Persephone's arm and clasped her wrist, her fingers pressed against Persephone's pulse.

Thoughts churned through Persephone's mind, each one slippery and sinister. Hades would do this again. Bring her to the edge of death and leave her there, caught between awareness and unconsciousness, over and over. Her nature demanded it. The no-man's-land between life and death held power, held promise. That moment before a seed put forth its root, before its leaves burst forth from its casing—moments of potential, of hope made real.

Hades would do this again. Guide her to some new desire, unravel her body with nothing but a touch and some words and the heat from her eyes.

And Persephone would let her.

*Do you trust me?*

She could trust Hades to do as she pleased. But the things that pleased Hades were not always unpalatable.

Persephone shifted, shaking off Hades' grasp and drawing up the hem of her own chiton, raising it past her hips. She took Hades' hand and guided it between her legs, beneath her undergarment, then arranged Hades' other hand so it lay with fingers splayed against her neck.

Hades' breath hitched as she stroked her. The darkness receded from her eyes, leaving only warmth and passion.

Persephone rocked against her hand. She pressed her throat against her fingers. When Hades tightened her grip around her neck, Persephone came, breathlessly, her eyes ground shut so she didn't have to see the lust on Hades' face.

Her first breath when Hades released her was dizzying, sweet as the spring rains. She leaned her forehead against Hades' shoulder. A few tears rolled down her cheeks, and she blinked them away. She drew back and kissed her arousal clean from Hades' fingertips, gazing up at her as she did so, at Hades' spellbound wonderment.

She had to escape before Hades ruined her, before she grew so deviant that her body refused to come for anyone else.

"You were made for me," Hades whispered. "To be with me."

Persephone shuddered. Worst of all, she was no longer certain she disagreed.

## OTHER BOOKS BY LIANYU TAN

- [Captive in the Underworld: A Dark Lesbian Romance Novel](#)
- Unnamed [Gentleman Jack x Big Love] dark fantasy trilogy—book 1 coming 2022

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And with thanks to my readers and reviewers.

## ABOUT LIANYU TAN

Princesses in towers. Heroines in chains. Tales of abduction, suffering and smoldering passions. Those stories have captured Lianyu's imagination since forever.

In her dark lesbian romance novels, fear can turn to love, monsters can find redemption, and beauty always succumbs to the beast.

Lianyu was born in Malaysia, but now lives in Australia with her wife and two cats. She loves to hear from readers. You can reach her as follows:

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